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STATEMENT BY

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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES
POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE COMMITTEE
U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON

REAUTHORIZATION OF ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES
H.R. 1534

APRIL 24, 1985

My name is Donald M. MacIntyre, National Vice President for the Fourteenth District of the American Federation of Government Employees. Nationwide our union represents more than 750-thousand Federal and D.C. city workers. In my testimony today, I will address the concerns and interests of both our national organization and those of the men and women working here in our nation's capital.

My district encompasses the District of Columbia and the surrounding counties in Maryland and Virginia. As you know, the Federal government is the largest and most influential employer in this Washington metropolitan area. I, therefore, appear before you with a very real understanding of the importance of this legislation which will make alternative work schedules and flexitime permanent for all Federal workers.

As I testify today, the attacks on Federal and public workers have escalated to a degree unprecedented in our nation's history. The Reagan Administration is attempting to persuade the public that the government's employees are underworked and overcompensated for the work that they perform. While pay for most Federal workers is currently 18 percent lower than that of their private sector counterparts, we are faced with the possibility of a five percent pay cut next year, increased retirement payments and health insurance premiums, as well as the possible loss of our jobs through the elimination of programs and contracting out.

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In addition, in an attempt to hide their own mismanagement of the economy, the Administration has escalated its anti-Federal employee rhetoric, leaving the workforce weakened and demoralized, with apathy and frustration commonplace.

However, in spite of the persistently negative atmosphere in which employees must work, there has been one program which improves morale, cuts absenteeism, enhances productivity and is received with enthusiasm by managers and workers alike, and that is the program establishing alternative work schedules (AWS). AFGE is, therefore, pleased to appear before you today in support of H.R. 1534, legislation which will make the program permanent.

Reports by both the General Accounting Office and the Office of Personnel Management clearly document the success of the program.

According to OPM, 41 federal agencies report that they have alternative work schedule programs in effect, covering 308,000 employees.

GAO visited 11 of these agencies. Without exception, agency officials reported that they have had positive results and were in favor of continuing it. They stated that efficiency of operations, service to the public, employment opportunities, and employee morale have improved. In addition, the report found beneficial changes in leave usage, overtime costs, travel and per diem costs, equipment utilization, energy consumption, and employee commuting habits.

More significantly, the results of the GAO survey on the AWS program sent out to both employees and supervisors showed very

strong support throughout the government for the program. Ninety-two percent indicated that they support continuation of the program. Seventy-nine percent believed the program has had a favorable effect on their morale and eighty percent felt that flexible schedules helped them meet family obligations without taking leave.

These findings clearly match the overwhelming enthusiasm for the program from AFGE's local unions and membership in agencies where the program has been negotiated.

This experience in the Federal sector is supported by research in much of the private sector. Jerome Rosow, writing for the Work in America Institute, argues that productivity is the result of a committed and involved workforce which is able to and willing to solve problems as well as carry out specific tasks. Workers who have a sense of involvement and control over their work are more productive and will provide better services to their employers and the public.

We believe that the collective bargaining provisions of the bill are the keys to the achievement of these goals.

The use of alternative work schedules (AWS) and flexitime which are established through negotiations provides that sense of control and involvement for workers. It allows managers and workers together to determine the appropriate work schedules for the tasks that must be completed, not some nameless, faceless regulation-writer located far from the worksite.

While we welcome passage of H.R. 1534 and the permanent establishment of this program, we believe that there are a number of operational changes which would further enhance its

value. We would like to put these into the record for possible inclusion in the report to accompany the bill.

In collective bargaining units, determinations as to adverse agency impact are resolved by a hearing before the Federal Service Impasses Panel (FSIP). Our experience has shown some problems in these hearings.

The decisions of the Federal Service Impasses Panel have been limited at the initial hearing to a determination of whether there is an adverse agency impact. A second hearing is required to determine the specific procedures for the flexitime or alternative work schedules. Not only is this procedure particularly expensive and cumbersome, FSIP decisions are made in a vacuum. More importantly, the two determinations are not mutually exclusive. Our experience at such impasse hearings has shown that the agency's testimony largely consists of some perceived notion on their part of problems of office coverage, loss of supervisory control, and extra timekeeping functions. Often a review of the union's proposals, which provide these necessary controls, can lay to rest the fears of management and any possible misconceptions of the Panel which might be based on such agency allegations.

We recommend that the Panel be allowed to make findings concerning adverse agency impact and at the same time consider and make recommendations and findings on the union's proposals.

Finally we wish to address the concern raised by the Office of Personnel Management with regard to employees on a compressed work week who receive credit for a ten hour holiday. The Director of OPM ignores the fact that when these same employees take annual and sick leave they must take ten hours of leave rather than the eight hours taken by employees not on a compressed schedule. By limiting employees to eight hours of holiday pay, even when the holiday falls on a day for which the employee is scheduled to work ten hours, the employee will be paid for less than the 40 hour week for which he or she is scheduled. We believe that requiring employees to work an additional two hours is punitive and totally unjustified in light of the administrative expense and confusion that would result. Further, we have seen no data showing that employees on a compressed work schedule work fewer hours overall or receive more total pay due to the compressed schedule.

In conclusion, we again thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify today. AFGE believes that a properly administered AWS program is good for management and good for employees, and urge your continued support in the effort to make alternative work schedules permanent.